

# Warns of Publishers-Journalists

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(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

Williamsburg, Va., May 26—A world trend toward a "journalists versus owner-publishers" conflict is developing and may affect the United States.

This is the opinion of Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, publisher of L'Express, a French business magazine. Servan-Schreiber said the May, 1969, events in the French press may be the beginning of permanent problems in the journalism profession, just as the Berkeley, Cal., riots of 1967 started world-wide student unrest.

Servan-Schreiber made these remarks here at the international magazine conference, the annual meeting of the Magazine Publishers association.

## Power Not Accepted

"At the risk of oversimplifying the conflict, I would summarize it by saying that in many dailies and magazines in France editors no longer accept that the power of the proprietor should be absolute," he said. "They go as far as requesting legislative action in order to curb the power of owner-publishers of their publications.

"No one can predict that this law will be voted, but we already have experienced several strikes including, last week, the one which forced France's oldest and most prestigious daily, Le Figaro, to suspend publication."

Journalists in France are making demands not completely without justification, he said.

## Cites Chicago Convention

Referring to the National Democratic convention in Chicago, he said "even in a free-press loving country as this one, journalists who for instance report on political conventions can get badly hurt by a nondiscriminating police force, too. Professionals experience the same kind of risk. And this leads them to believe that they have specific rights."

It is also true, he said, that not all publishers feel strongly enough or independent enough to ignore the influence of powerful advertisers.

Servan-Schreiber said this "journalists versus owner-publishers" problem is, by no means, specific to France.

"Even in the United States the limit of the publisher's power has been noted when for instance the publisher of the New York Times was not really able, because of some opposition from his editors, to change the head of his Washington bureau."

Servan-Schreiber said "journalists associations" have been established in France "in no less than 30 newspaper, magazine, and press groups. Editors have grouped themselves into these associations, which are small incorporated companies of which each editor member owns shares. They elect a president who represents them. These associations have no direct link with actual leading unions.

Basically, he said the journalists' associations want four things:

1. A veto power in the choice of the publisher, especially when the publication is sold or when the publisher dies or resigns.

2. A special professional status for the journalists different from the employees of the publishing enterprise, and reducing the rights of the publisher to alter their articles.

3. Legislation to require publishers to sell them 35 per cent of the stock of the companies they work in so that while participating in the profits they can have a veto right on vital decisions affecting the life of the publication.

4. Steps to make information a public service protected from the power of money and capital. To achieve that, they propose that magazines or newspapers become some part of nonprofit foundations.

Servan-Schreiber cited the fact that publications are bought and sold as any goods and that people do not like the feeling of being traded. Also, the death of an owner-publisher brought into power his widow in France, whose main journalistic competence up to then was to organize her husband's dinners, he said.

"The editors of Stern [a German magazine] now have the right to elect a seven-man council which can retain or dismiss the editor of the magazine possibly against the will of the publisher," he said. "The staff must be consulted on any change of ownership and

no journalist can be forced to work on an article against his conscience."

Servan-Schreiber responded to one question from his audience by saying that it is not necessarily wrong that editors are asking for more power, "but they are putting themselves aside from others in the publishing business, saying the others are different and don't count. But, it is teamwork that makes the publication work."

Servan-Schreiber said the trend today is toward participation or motivation. "Money no longer is the only answer," he said. "The people want something close to ownership and not only stock options, but participation."

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